

September 26, 2005

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News Release

NEW JERSEY ICE AGENTS ARREST EIGHT IN FRAUDULENT DOCUMENT RING *Ringleader in Fraud Scheme is Two Time Convicted Felon Who Helped People Change Their Identity*

NEWARK, N.J. – A year long investigation into a fraudulent documents ring operating in New Jersey and Pennsylvania has resulted in the arrest today of eight individuals, including the woman who is the ring leader and a former policeman who is a Pennsylvania Department of Transportation official.

The investigation by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the U.S Attorney for the District of New Jersey, as well as the Waterfront Commission of New York harbor, and the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office, has dismantled a criminal organization that provided hundreds of Pennsylvania drivers' licenses to illegal aliens and others who wanted to obtain false identities.

Newark Special Agent in Charge Kyle Hutchins and United States Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced the arrests jointly today.

The arrests began at dawn today as teams of ICE agents in Pennsylvania and the Trenton, NJ area arrested the eight suspects and conducted searches at two locations. The ringleader, Altagracia "Grace" Rosario, 45, was arrested in Robbinsville, NJ. Rosario's organization provided fraudulent supporting documents which were then used to obtain Pennsylvania driver's licenses and commercial driver's licenses (CDL). Without the supporting documents provided by Rosario the individuals would not have been able to obtain the licenses.

Agents also arrested 62-year-old Pennsylvania Department of Transportation official Ronald Henry at his home in Philadelphia. The criminal Complaint alleges that Henry was paid to falsify records indicating that the individuals had taken both a written and a road test to obtain their license. Henry is a former Philadelphia police officer.

Much of the evidence in the case was developed through surveillance and court authorized wiretaps. The wiretaps were placed on telephones at the Rosario and Henry residences.

According to the criminal complaint filed in US District Court in Newark the supporting documents provided by Rosario allowed Henry to issue the valid driver's licenses and remain above suspicion. Both Rosario and Henry are charged with conspiracy to commit identity fraud, a violation of 18 USC section 371. Conspiracy is punishable by a maximum of five years in prison.

Newark Special Agent in Charge Kyle Hutchins said, "This organization was helping individuals create new identities and in today's world that is a serious threat to our national security." Hutchins also pointed out that the individuals who fraudulently obtained commercial driver's licenses were in most cases not properly trained and did not take the road test as required under Pennsylvania law, thereby "creating a significant public safety threat on our highways."

The case developed a year ago when investigators from the Waterfront Commission of New York Harbor had an individual with a Pennsylvania driver's license under investigation. Based on information they uncovered during the investigation, the Waterfront Commission contacted ICE agents who started the identity fraud investigation. The Waterfront Commission is a bi-state law enforcement agency that investigates crime in the New York and New Jersey ports. During the investigation ICE received significant assistance from the Commission police and from the Pennsylvania Attorney General's office.

In some cases investigators found that the organization was providing illegal aliens with Puerto Rican birth certificates and social security cards obtained from the original owners. Armed with the birth certificates the illegal aliens were able to pose as United States Citizens. Rosario then sent the aliens to the Pennsylvania Department of Motor Vehicles official who issued them driver's licenses.

In addition the investigators found that Rosario obtained or manufactured fraudulent identity documents, including non-immigrant visas and altered passports. These documents were provided to the clients to be presented at the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation office when they applied for driver's licenses.

The organization was charging from \$2,000 to \$5,000, depending on the type of license the individual wanted. The investigation uncovered that a large number of licenses issued were commercial driver's licenses.

Investigators also found that Rosario was helping individuals with final orders of removal change their identity in order to avoid deportation from the United States. Also arrested and charged with conspiracy to commit identity fraud are:

- Nancy Elgende, 27, Rosario's daughter and a United States Citizen living in Trenton, NJ
- Lizette Mahsel, 24 also Rosario's daughter and a United States Citizen living in Robbinsville, NJ
- Christopher Nix, 25, a United States Citizen who has addresses in Robbinsville and East Windsor, NJ and Philadelphia, PA
- Laura Moraga, 26 an illegal alien living in South Bound Brook, NJ and Bath, PA
- Carlos Castro Matamoros, 42, an illegal alien with addresses in Bogota, NJ and Glenolden, PA
- Jose Rios, 39, a United States Citizen living in Trenton, NJ

Hutchins thanked the Waterfront Commission for their excellent work on the case and also the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office for support during the investigation.

The defendants are scheduled for an initial appearance before U.S. Magistrate Judge Patty Shwartz in the old courthouse and Post Office building in Newark this afternoon.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.

